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# COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM

## SEARCHING FOR A NEW PARADIGM

EDITED BY STEVE TSANG

  
PRAEGER  
SECURITY  
INTERNATIONAL

# Combating Transnational Terrorism

Searching for a New Paradigm

Edited by Steve Tsang

PSI Reports

**PRAEGER SECURITY INTERNATIONAL**

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## Intelligence Sharing and Cooperation: Opportunities and Pitfalls

*Emile A. Nakhleh*

This chapter basically consists of two parts: an analysis of the radicalization process and terrorism and a presentation of a "practitioner's" view of intelligence sharing. The analysis is informed by the author's discussions with hundreds of Muslim interlocutors across the Muslim world and dozens of exchanges with security and intelligence services in numerous countries. The discussion of terrorism takes into consideration the three levels of terrorism—global (for example, Al Qaeda), regional (for example, the Jema'a Islamiya and Hizb al-Tahrir), and local or territorial (for example, Hamas, Hizballah, and East Turkestan Islamic Movement [ETIM]). Terrorism is not monolithic; it is diverse and complex, political and ideological, religious and nationalistic.

### THE THREAT: RISE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM

In the last two decades, terrorism has emerged as a global phenomenon transcending regions, countries, and religions. Although most of the perpetrators of terrorist acts in recent years, before and since 9/11, have used a narrow interpretation of Islam to justify their terrorist acts, many of their victims have been Muslims. In addition to Western countries, terrorist acts also have been committed in Muslim countries including Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Kuwait, Yemen, and others. Because terrorists' operations, targets, and victims have been global, efforts to combat terrorism in all of its facets—recruiting, ideology, religious justification, operations, intelligence,

and propaganda—must, by necessity, be transnational. To be effective and comprehensive, such efforts must reflect collaboration and intelligence sharing among counterterrorism agencies, intelligence and security services, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and entities, and international experts.

There are two salient points about global terrorism that we need to keep in mind:

- Terrorism against the West did not start with 9/11 and will not end with the closing of Guantanamo and the eventual demise of Osama Bin Ladin, Ayman Zawahiri, and other top leaders of Al Qaeda.
- According to public opinion polls, vast majorities of Muslims worldwide oppose violence and terrorism and desire to live in open and free societies. However, a small minority continues to justify the use of violence and supports the radicals' interpretation of Islam, which justifies terrorism against perceived enemies of Islam.

According to academic research, the factors that have been driving the radicalization of segments of Islamic activists are personal, psychological, and sociopolitical. The personal and psychological drivers include a sense of defeat, a "culture of humiliation," a search for identity, and a desire for revenge because of a personal tragedy, whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, or Palestine. Some youth who lack hope regarding the future, who do not possess the right education to qualify them for jobs in the modern economy, or who see no just outcome of their daily struggle turn to violence as the only way out of their situations.

The socioeconomic and political factors include Islamist<sup>1</sup> media, especially the Internet and satellite television stations; Islamic education (textbooks, educational curricula, and other publications); economic stresses and unemployment; regional conflicts in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Iraq, Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Philippines, and elsewhere; perceived anti-Islamic policies by the Christian West; recruiting by radicals; and proselytization, or *da'wa*.

- Some have maintained that the financial support by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states and the active role of international Islamic NGOs and charitable foundations, such as the Muslim World League, the International Islamic Relief Organization, al-Haramayn, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth have inadvertently contributed to the spread of radicalization among militant Muslims.
- The frequent messages and pronouncements by radical clerics, in Saudi Arabia and other countries of the Arabian Peninsula, have also contributed to the spread of radicalization among Muslim youth and have been an effective tool in recruiting disgruntled and alienated youth.
- Proselytization by Saudi Arabia worldwide has been given a big boost thanks to high oil prices and the accumulation of unprecedented oil wealth.

Saudi proselytization,<sup>2</sup> which preaches a Saudi interpretation of Islam known as "Wahhabism" or "Tawhidi Islam," has been very active over the last four decades

since the Saudi government under the late King Faisal bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud decided to make proselytization a cardinal principle of Saudi foreign policy. Using Islam to fight Communism, socialism, and Arab nationalism, the Saudi government actively spread its interpretation of Islam through money, educational institutions, developmental projects, and international Islamic NGOs. These NGOs, many of which are headquartered in Saudi Arabia and neighboring Gulf Arab countries, have offered academic scholarships to international students to study at Saudi Islamic universities such as Imam Muhammad University in Riyadh, Um al-Qura University in Mecca, and the Islamic University in Medina. Once they finish their studies, most of these students return to their countries to teach in religious schools and preach in mosques. Copies of the Qur'an and other religious textbooks taught at these schools and used for prayer at the mosques are usually printed in Saudi Arabia under the guidance of the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs, which, of course, espouses the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam.<sup>3</sup>

Western security analysts find the Saudi connection to the spread of intolerant interpretations of Islam problematic, according to media reports and academic analysis. On the one hand, the Saudi state has suffered from terrorism and the Al Saud ruling family has been vilified by Osama Bin Ladin and other radicals, and, on the other hand, Saudi Arabia and its powerful Wahhabi religious establishment have spent vast amounts of oil wealth to spread their brand of Islam across the world. Briefly, Wahhabi Muslims and radicals tend to emphasize those chapters in the Qur'an that were revealed to address specific problems that the Prophet Muhammad was experiencing while in Medina, including his relations with Jews and polytheists and the ensuing battles he fought while in that city. However, they tend to underemphasize the chapters revealed to the prophet in Mecca, which advocate universal values and harmonic relations with the Jewish and Christian faiths and their prophets. Furthermore, as a pro-Western country, Saudi Arabia has worked closely with Western intelligence and security services since September 11, 2001, but especially since May 2003, after a wave of terrorist attacks hit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to identify and apprehend potential terrorists and thwart their future plans. According to media reports, this bifurcated Saudi position—preaching a conservative form of Islam while cooperating with international security and intelligence services against Islamic terrorists—has placed the Saudi ruling family in an uncomfortable position internationally and *vis-à-vis* its own religious establishment.

### TERRORIST TACTICS AND ARGUMENTS

Terrorists continue to peddle their "success," arguing to their potential recruits that violence is the only tactic that can "humiliate" major Western powers, including the United States; undermine pro-Western regimes; and, ultimately, usher in an Islamic state. They also preach to radicalized youth that their interpretation of Islam is the only correct one, and they appeal to nonradical Muslims by linking their terrorist tactics with "resistance," or *muqawama*, to pro-Western regimes and to foreign "occupation" of Muslim lands. They also use the threat of violence to

suppress open debate and freedom of speech among Muslims regarding the religious justification of violence, and they maintain that "success" on the ground, including the fact that Bin Ladin and his deputy Zawahiri continue to elude capture, is a justification of terrorism.

Terrorist threats against Muslim and non-Muslim regimes and governments emanate from continuing linkages between international and domestic groups and individuals and the energizing impact of the Internet on disaffected and unemployed young people. Nationalist Islamic radical organizations and movements that believe they are fighting for territorial causes—for example, the end of occupation, autonomy, secession, or independence—also engage in violence and terrorism, albeit not on the global level. Islamization and radicalization will likely grow among Muslims worldwide in the next 5 to 10 years, including among Muslim youth in Western countries. Diversity, complexity, and sectarian tensions characterize Islamic communities throughout the world; the political, religious, and social tensions that exist in a particular country frequently tend to spill over to other countries and, in some cases, express themselves in terrorist acts.

- Sunni-Shia conflicts and violence that currently exist in the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim world could develop into terrorist acts against perceived enemies of Islam—Muslims and non-Muslims—because of perceptions—often mistaken—among some Muslims that these perceived enemies are behind sectarian conflicts.
- Some Muslim youth turn to Islam as an identity anchor and a rationalization for specific violent acts. To these Muslim radicals and terrorists, Islam represents a total way of life—*Din* (faith), *Dunya* (society), and *Dawla* (state)—that combines the private and the public spheres of their violent acts.
- Radicalized Muslim youth seem to nurture their support for terrorism through ongoing contacts with like-minded individuals and groups, clerics, imams, and self-proclaimed experts on Islam. They also interact with Islamic societies and organizations, watch and listen to satellite television and radio programs, read regional and international newspapers and Internet communications (printed in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Dari, Malay, Bahasa Indonesia, and other languages), and use cassettes, videos, DVDs, and text messages in support of specific terrorist acts.

Globally Islamic terrorists generally follow the radical paradigm of Bin Ladin and Al Qaeda, which claims that Islam—faith and territory—is under attack and that the "enemy" consists of the Christian Crusaders headed by the United States, the Zionists headed by Israel, and pro-Western Arab and Muslim regimes. Bin Ladin further maintains that jihad, by whatever means, in the face of this attack is a duty on all Muslims and that the killing of innocent civilians and the use of weapons of mass destruction are justified as part of this jihad. Providing a religious cover for terrorism has been an effective recruiting strategy, especially among youth with poor economic prospects. Al Qaeda's ideology tends to appeal to potential

recruits among Muslim youth, especially those who are unemployed, alienated, and single and have no hope for a bright economic future or a married life. These potential recruits also tend to have a limited education; many of them are high school drop-outs. Of course, the radical ideology also appeals to some middle-class and educated Muslims, because, while they might not endorse Bin Ladin's terrorist tactics, especially killing innocent civilians, they generally support his criticism of Western countries' policies toward the Muslim world. They usually brand such policies as anti-Islamic.

In justifying terrorism, the Bin Ladin paradigm presents violent jihad as a struggle between good and evil, in which Islam is on the side of the good and the perceived enemies of Islam on the side of evil. This struggle, he argues, will continue until the "final days." However, on this last point there is a disagreement between Al Qaeda, as an advocate of global jihad, and country-specific Islamist organizations such as Hamas, Hizballah, and the ETIM, that aspire to achieve territorial autonomy or independence. The support that Al Qaeda and Bin Ladin find in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, for example, is driven by factors that transcend Al Qaeda's global radical ideology, including financial support; a sense of hospitality; dislike for the central government and, of course, a dislike of U.S. policy toward Pakistan, Kashmir, and India.

Western intelligence services should be able to take advantage of these disagreements and use them in the fight against terrorism. These services could find a common ground with nationalist Islamists because of their specific territorial goals. These groups do not share the millenarian ideology of Al Qaeda and focus instead on their own objectives.

### TERRORISM AND THE BATTLE FOR THE "HEARTS AND MINDS"

Although, in the last decade, the vast majority of Muslims worldwide have not renounced terrorism forcefully and openly, in the last two years more and more Muslims are speaking out against terrorism and the wanton killing of innocent civilians.

Debate is raging among Muslim thinkers and intellectuals about which vision of Islam Muslims should pursue. Moderate Muslim thinkers who have been speaking out against the radical paradigm have argued that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims should not necessarily be conflictive, as Bin Ladin has postulated, and that the Qur'an, revealed to Muhammad in 7th-century Arabia, must be transformed to fit Muslim life in a 21st-century globalized world. According to media reports and academic analysis, many Muslims are shunning politics by turning to Sufism. For Muslims who want to practice their faith and who reject the radical paradigm associated with Sunni Islam, Sufism offers a comfortable alternative. Sufi groups and "brotherhoods," such as the Turkish Millet Gorusu under the leadership of Fethullah Gulen and the Nakshibendi, the Muridiyya, and Qadiriyya movements, have attracted large numbers of Muslims in the Balkans, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and in sub-Saharan Africa. Sufi followers are also found in Europe and North America. New adherents to Sufism

tend to view religion as a personal relationship between the individual and God without being caught up in the communal, public requirements of the community of the faithful, or the *umma*. As I have written elsewhere, "Sufism does not preach a strict adherence to the five tenets of Islam as interpreted by Sunni Islam but instead views religion as an individual effort to bring people closer to God and to comprehend the beauty of the universe."<sup>4</sup>

Today the millions of Sunni Muslims who live in Western Christian countries are being urged by moderate thinkers to reconcile their faith and their citizenship in these countries and to reject terrorism. A lively debate is underway among these Muslims regarding the necessity to become active citizens in Muslim minority countries, while at the same time maintain their adherence to their faith. Some have argued against integration or assimilation in Western societies because of their perceived fear that integration would dilute their religious cultural values and practices.

A majority of Muslims in these countries, however, including most of their prominent thinkers, have favored integration and see no contradiction between their religious values and practices and their citizenship in non-Muslim countries. Some thinkers have even gone so far as to pursue a new line of reasoning, or *ijtihad*, about developing a system of jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, to suit the circumstances of Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim countries. Although a high degree of diversity characterizes the ideological and theoretical positions of these thinkers, and although some of their statements over the years seem contradictory, most of them favor integration of Muslims in the new world. Many of them are also strong advocates of freedom of worship and actively defend their co-religionists' right to practice their faith openly and without fear or discrimination. Millions of Muslims in Western countries have, in fact, integrated into these societies; are productive citizens; have prospered economically and professionally; and oppose radicalism, extremism, and terrorism.

Many of them, like other Muslims in Muslim countries, renounce attacks on innocent civilians and reject Bin Ladin's and Al Qaeda's radical paradigm, according to numerous public opinion polls. Some of these Muslims, believing that terrorism in the name of Islam has inflicted thousands of casualties on Muslims, might even cooperate with security services in the fight against terrorism. Muslim thinkers in Western countries and in Muslim countries—including Khalid Abu el-Fadl and Abdullahi Ahmad al-Na'im of the United States, Abdol Karim Soroush of Iran, Muhammad Shahrur of Syria, Tariq Ramadan of Switzerland, Muhammad Arkun of France, Hasan Hanafi of Egypt, and others—have argued that certain aspects of Western political culture, including parliamentary democracy, political and social pluralism, women's rights, civil society, and human rights, are compatible with Islamic scriptures and traditions. According to many public opinion polls, most Muslims believe in these values.

Although the modernist message of these thinkers seems to have only limited influence in the Muslim heartland because many of them reside in Europe and the United States, some of their writings are being translated into "Muslim" languages. Most Muslims in the United States and other Western countries tend to be more receptive to the reformist message. The battle for the "hearts and minds"

of Muslims is critical, and public opinion polls in Muslim countries clearly show that moderate thinkers have a long way to go.

- Reaching out to the vast majority of Muslims is a daunting challenge, which requires a long-term commitment in time, resources, and personnel. It also requires a thorough knowledge of the cultures involved, sophisticated influence operations, strategically developed public diplomacy campaigns, a coherent and carefully crafted message, and credible Muslim voices or indigenous "agents of influence."
- These "indigenous agents" include grass roots groups, Islamic political parties, civil society activists, professional associations, educational organizations, young clerics and imams, and law enforcement and intelligence services.

Although indigenous groups can play a constructive role—albeit informal—in the fight against terrorism, formal sharing of intelligence among law enforcement and intelligence agencies remains central to bilateral and multilateral cooperation in this area. However, it is important that the intelligence-sharing effort to combat terrorism must be kept separate from public attempts and policies to win the hearts and minds of Muslims and to create an environment conducive to moderation.

#### BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION

Cooperation and intelligence sharing between and among states must be multifaceted and comprehensive as well as tactical and strategic. Such cooperation occurs among allies and with friendly and not so friendly governments. Two quotes from former Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), George Tenet's, book illustrate the extent and depth of intelligence cooperation among different countries:

I met with visiting senior security officials from just about every country imaginable. Most countries had multiple intelligence services, and so I would need to be in touch with various sets of people from the same country. . . . These were not social visits. There were briefing books to study before each meeting telling what the groups wanted from us and what we wanted from them.<sup>5</sup>

Tenet underscores the importance of personal connections in nurturing intelligence cooperation among services from other countries:

At least 90 percent of the trips I made overseas during my seven years as DCI were to the Middle East or to border nations of Central and South Asia. I went often, and I kept going back, to build personal relationships that might at some point yield a breakthrough.<sup>6</sup>

The different facets of counterterrorism cooperation usually comprise many areas, including the following:

- terrorists and potential terrorists—individuals and organizations;
- context and environment of terrorism;
- social, political, economic, and religious factors that drive terrorism and radicalism;
- ideological arguments advanced by the "enablers" of terrorism and the political, religious, and psychological underpinnings of terrorism;
- role of social movements in advancing terrorism;
- relationship between proselytization (*da'wa*) and the recruiting of potential terrorists;
- organizational structure of terrorist networks and cells;
- process by which young Muslims discover their brand of Islam, identify with it, and use it to justify their radicalization and violent acts;
- transformation from radicalization to terrorism; and
- attitudes among mainstream Muslims toward violence and terrorism, especially the targeting of innocent civilians.

Bilateral cooperation and intelligence sharing offers the cooperating partners long-term benefits when it focuses on the factors and actors that give rise to terrorism, including justifying it, enabling it, and nurturing it. Such cooperation also carries short-term tactical benefits when it *identifies* individual terrorists and groups and their supporters, *tracks* their movements and contacts, *targets* their financial transactions, *deciphers* their intelligence and communications, *analyzes* their plots, and, I hope, *anticipates* their future plans and potential targets.

- Cooperation between intelligence services is most effective, productive, and enduring when it is based on professionalism, good tradecraft, genuine exchange of information, and a willingness to share relevant and appropriate intelligence information about terrorists and potential terrorists.
- When one or more intelligence service is less than forthcoming, whether for tradecraft or political reasons, cooperation becomes perfunctory and, certainly, unproductive.

Effectiveness of cooperation, of course, depends on the specific counterterrorism issue under consideration, the nature of the information being sought, the method of collection, the source or sources of information, and whether the information is derived from within the territory of the partnering country. Productive cooperation also is driven by whether the collaborative partners fully agree on definitions of relevant terminology—for example, "terrorism," "jihad," "radicalism,"

"recruitment," "recantation," "proselytization," and "charity"—and ultimate objectives of, and methods used in, the counterterrorism effort. It is not surprising that cooperation is often subject to political constraints imposed by one or more partners in the cooperative arrangement. Such constraints, which vary from one country to the next, are invariably determined by the overall strategic and ideological relationship between and among partnering states.

### INTELLIGENCE COLLABORATION AMONG WESTERN COUNTRIES

Intelligence sharing among Western and other industrialized countries—for example, the United States, the European Community, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan—is usually more comprehensive, professional, and less political than among other countries. Western countries share a common understanding of the terrorist threat facing them and their citizens, follow generally similar trade-craft practices, and have well-trained law enforcement agencies and intelligence services. They also have had a long tradition of sharing all kinds of information and have developed sophisticated techniques of tracking movements of terrorists and their money. These countries also share a common understanding of the terminology usually associated with radicalism, terrorism, enablers of terrorism, and the radicalization process.

Another area of common concern among Western countries is the growing radicalization among some Muslim youth born and raised in these countries. The July 2007 report of the New York Police Department titled, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*,<sup>7</sup> clearly shows that local communities, such as New York City, are becoming more concerned about the growth of extremism and the whole process of radicalization of some Muslim youth. The authors of the report examined five foreign terrorist cases (Madrid, March 2004 attack; Amsterdam, November 2004; London, July 2005; Sydney/Melbourne, November 2005; and Toronto, June 2006) and five United States cases (Portland, Oregon—the Portland Seven; Northern Virginia; Lackawanna, New York—the Lackawanna Six; and two New York city incidents—the Herald Square Subway and the Al-Muhajiroun Two). The report argues that the radicalization process consists of four distinct phases: "pre-radicalization," "self-identification," "indoctrination," and "jihadization." A key finding in the report is that, rather than being directed by Al Qaeda from overseas, terrorist plots "have been conceptualized and planned by 'unremarkable' local residents/citizens who sought to attack their country of residence, utilizing Al Qaeda as their inspiration and reference point."<sup>9</sup>

Political differences occasionally flare up among some of these countries in areas related to the fight against terrorism; the identification, tracking, apprehending and transporting of terrorists; and the religious underpinnings and drivers of terrorism. However, these differences have not derailed their counterterrorism cooperation because these countries generally are in agreement on the strategic objectives of fighting terrorism. Furthermore, since these democratic countries, for the most part, share common ideologies about governance, citizenship, political culture, and

national security, they have been willing to exchange information about potential radicals and terrorists in their own territory. Cooperation among intelligence services and security organizations in Western countries goes hand in hand with close relations among the political leaders and governments of these countries. For decades, these countries have cooperated across the board on a variety of national issues, including intelligence and national security and defense. Once they faced the terrorist threat after 9/11, their counterterrorism collaboration evolved naturally and without serious obstacles. Finally, although Western countries are non-Muslim, some of them have sizable Muslim minorities numbering in the millions.

Because majorities of these Muslim communities do not support terrorism, according to public opinion polls, some of these Muslim citizens can contribute significantly through their security services to the counterterrorism effort. Although it only takes a small minority or a handful of radicals to commit acts of terrorism, Muslim citizens who abhor violence and terrorism can help intelligence and security agencies by identifying the neighborhoods that breed potential terrorists, the informal and familial connections that link them together, the community "enablers" who nurture them, and the sources of anger and alienation that drive them.

### INTELLIGENCE SHARING AMONG NON-WESTERN COUNTRIES

Intelligence sharing also occurs among countries that do not share common cultural heritage with Western countries but which share a common threat from terrorism. They include such countries as India, Japan, China, Russia, some former Soviet republics, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, South Africa, and other African countries. Although non-Western, these states are not Muslim majority countries but some have sizable Muslim minorities. They share intelligence on terrorism, which they perceive as a global menace and/or a threat to their domestic stability and regional security. Though cooperative with the United States and other Western countries, these countries often are critical of the United States and other Western countries' approach to counterterrorism. Understandably, they also tend to view terrorism from a self-centered perspective—for example, Chechnya for Russia, Kashmir for India, Xinjiang for China, and Mindanao for the Philippines. Some of the governments in these countries perceive sharing intelligence with other countries as a vehicle to fight their immediate threat and, therefore, are more cooperative when the issue strikes close to home; they are less so when the focus is purely global. Intelligence cooperation with non-Western countries is a double-edged sword because oftentimes countries tend to classify some of those groups as "terrorist" in order to discredit them or neutralize their influence, both domestically and internationally. An example of this phenomenon would be China's branding of ETIM as a terrorist organization. While such action might serve the short-term interests of China, in the long run it alienates many Chinese Muslims from the government at a time when Beijing is actively engaged in winning the hearts and minds of the Chinese Muslim

community. It would be more efficacious if a government brands some actions of these groups as "terrorist" but not the entire group, thereby keeping the door open for collaboration between the government and the Islamist groups against potential terrorism.

- The quality of intelligence sharing among non-Western countries tends to be uneven, unpredictable, and often problematic. Furthermore, the collection and analysis done by intelligence and security services in some of these countries sometimes reflects weak trade-craft and questionable professionalism.
- On the positive side, these countries have expertise about their regions and deep expertise in dealing with dissidents and opposition groups.

### INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION WITH ARAB, MUSLIM, AND REGIONAL STATES

In recent years, intelligence sharing with Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries, the third group of countries under consideration, has been both productive and problematic. This group of countries includes, for example, most Arab states and the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, South and Central Asia (the so-called Stans), Azerbaijan, and Israel.

Intelligence sharing with Arab and Muslim countries has been *productive* for several reasons, including the following:

- expertise and familiarity with the Muslim religion;
- knowledge of Islamic history, culture, and religious sects;
- fluency in Arabic, Urdu, Kurdish, Turkish, and other languages spoken by Muslims;
- the Arab world is the cradle of Islam, and the place where millions of Muslims—both Sunnis and Shia—go to do the hajj;
- several Arab and Muslim regimes have had close economic, cultural, and political relations with Western countries;
- commitment by many Muslim governments to distance themselves from terrorism and from those who "have hijacked" Islam;
- familiarity with the backgrounds of terrorist leaders, their education, and family and tribal connections and with Islamic political parties, mainstream Islamic activist organizations, and radical movements; and
- knowledge of, and on-going contacts with, regional Islamist organizations and groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated organizations in Egypt and other Arab countries, Hamas in Palestine, Hizballah in Lebanon, and other Sunni and Shia political groups across the Middle East and South Asia.

While the quality of intelligence sharing varies from one country to the next, it is possible to identify several factors that underpin the precariousness of intelligence sharing with these countries:

- Because many Arab and Muslim regimes are preoccupied with their own survival, they tend to focus on intelligence that would help strengthen their position and weaken that of the opposition, regardless of whether the opposition is peaceful or violent, secular or Islamic. Also, regimes often perceive intelligence sharing as self-serving, not as a global effort to combat terrorism. However, once a country is hit with terrorism, as was the case in Saudi Arabia in May 2003, intelligence sharing between that country and other countries moves to a higher level. According to media reports, Saudi Arabia viewed those terrorist attacks as "the Kingdom's 9/11."
- Some regimes have even refused to admit that they have a terrorist problem at home; when they do concede that the problem exists, they assure Western interlocutors that they have it under control.
- Some Arab and Muslim intelligence and security services often have their own theories about the causes of terrorism, attributing such violence to specific foreign policies of outside powers. Their criticism of such foreign policies for their perceived anti-Islamic bias—whether in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, or Afghanistan—sometimes affects their contribution to intelligence collaboration.
- Similarly, their frequent disagreements with Western services over definitions and terms—for example, the meanings of "terrorism," "jihad," "proselytization," "piety," and "charity"—renders intelligence sharing and collaboration less productive.
- The diminishing legitimacy of some regimes has prevented them from publicly acknowledging a collaborative effort with Western, especially U.S., intelligence services. They are fearful that public knowledge of such cooperation would enrage segments of their Muslim populations. Guantanamo, Abu Ghib, and the international media's incessant discussion of torture, renditions, and "secret prisons" have made it much more difficult for some Arab and Muslim regimes to become enthused about intelligence sharing.
- Because Islamic activists over the years have penetrated the bureaucracies in many government ministries and departments in some Arab and Muslim countries, the confidentiality of intelligence sharing cannot be guaranteed and the quality of the information exchanged becomes suspect.
- Because of their country's geographic location and adversarial relations with their neighbors, some intelligence services tend to have a political agenda and are hesitant to share real intelligence about these countries.
- Lack of trade-craft expertise and experience in some Arab and Muslim intelligence services tends to enhance the politicization of the process.
- Although Israel falls almost in a separate category because of its ideology, location, and regional and global interests, intelligence sharing between it and regional and Western countries cuts across many of the issues raised above. Such

cooperation has not affected intelligence sharing between Western countries and the Arab world. In fact, according to media reports, Israel and some Arab countries have been involved in intelligence sharing and have exchanged visits by high-level security and intelligence officials, including Omar Suleiman, the head of the Egyptian intelligence service.

Of course, neither the advantages nor the disadvantages of intelligence collaboration with Arab and Muslim intelligence services are uniform or consistent. They vary from one country to the next and from one service to the next. Some Arab and Muslim services are more professional and better trained than others. Intelligence and counterterrorism officers in some of these services are committed professionals, regardless of their personal disagreements with specific policies, whether of their own regimes or of other countries.

### REGIONAL INTELLIGENCE SHARING

Media reports in recent years have discussed intelligence sharing among intelligence agencies of different groupings of states, including the European Community; some Arab states, including the Gulf Cooperation Council states; and several Muslim states (for example, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and several Arab states). Such collaboration in an effort to combat international terrorism can be beneficial for several reasons.

- These states, for the most part, share similar ideologies and interests and face similar threats.
- Intelligence services in these countries are usually familiar with the political ideologies and cultural heritage of the region and have easy access to opinion makers and thinkers—radical and moderate—in those regions.
- These services often possess information about travel, banking, and political activities of potential radicals and terrorists in their region and usually share this information with their counterparts. They tend to view the terrorist threat to one country in the group as a threat to the whole region.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

As was mentioned above, combating terrorism is a global responsibility and cannot be accomplished without bilateral and multilateral collaboration and intelligence sharing. For cooperations to be successful two basic conditions need to be met:

- Countries whose intelligence and law enforcement services are involved in intelligence sharing must have consensus on the strategic objectives of such cooperation, definitions of terms and concepts, the factors that drive terrorism, and the reasons why terrorism continues to resonate among Muslim youth.

- These countries also must have a common understanding of the trade-craft requirements necessary for an acceptable level of professionalism among intelligence services.

Despite some of the caveats stated above, bilateral and multilateral intelligence sharing since September 11, 2001, on the whole, has been productive and effective. Sharing of information has also enhanced the expertise of the people involved in the intelligence exchange process and has provided critical knowledge, which has led intelligence services to thwart terrorist operations and arrest or kill terrorist leaders.

If intelligence sharing is to be taken to the next level, partnering states must work jointly to deepen their services' expertise, make a long-term commitment to intelligence sharing and analysis in resources and personnel, provide trade-craft training, and narrow the differences among them. Joint training of intelligence and law enforcement officers across countries would be a useful strategy to achieve these goals and professionalize the process. Finally, cooperating states might find it useful to expand their intelligence sharing to areas that do not directly fall under the rubric of intelligence sharing—for example, educational curricula and textbooks, civil society associations, and oppositional activity. To drain the swamp of terrorism, it is imperative to analyze the societal context in which extremist thought seems to flourish.

Of course, intelligence sharing cannot be divorced from the political process, nationally and globally. The threat of terrorism that intelligence services perceive to their countries must be shared by their political leaders if countries are to implement effective, long-term cooperation mechanisms and strategies. It must also be viewed as global in nature. Unless countries' views of terrorism transcend those countries' "parochial" interests, multilateral intelligence cooperation will not be institutionalized beyond the realm of national security of individual countries.

Intelligence sharing tends to suffer from bad publicity. It is usually much more successful when it occurs away from the glaring lights of the media and investigative journalism. When certain policies of a particular country in the sphere of national security are viewed negatively in the world press—especially regarding human rights violations, unwarranted detentions of suspected terrorists or radicals without charges, harsh interrogations, rendition of detainees to other countries, etc.—other countries' intelligence services become more reticent to share intelligence with that country.

Media reports in the European press in the recent past about alleged U.S. actions regarding terrorists and potential terrorists have led several European and other countries to disassociate themselves—at least publicly—from the U.S. global efforts to combat terrorism. Usually, such "disassociation" tends to be short-lived and is often used for public consumption. According to a recent book by a former director of the Office of Legal Council in the U.S. Department of Justice on the differences between the U.S. government and European countries on detention of suspected terrorists at Guantanamo (GTMO), the Europeans saw the detention center as a "legal black hole." Furthermore, the author states that European countries and

human rights organizations viewed GTMO as “a law-free zone where Americans were exercising arbitrary and abusive power over the increasingly sympathetic terrorists.”<sup>8</sup>

Intelligence sharing usually cuts across the myriad of intelligence and security services—those that focus on domestic issues and others that pursue foreign threats, civilian and military directorates, and intelligence collection and law enforcement organizations. In some countries, the military directorates of intelligence are as aggressive as their civilian counterparts in collecting and analyzing terrorism related data. In other countries, the reverse is true. It stands to reason, therefore, that intelligence sharing should be more comprehensive and should not be restricted by bureaucratic lines that divide different intelligence organizations in different countries. Although the primary function of military intelligence is to provide intelligence information and analysis to that country’s military, especially in the midst of war, the pervasive nature of the terrorist threat requires military and civilian intelligence services to work much more closely than they had in the past, both nationally and multilaterally.

Finally, a key function of national intelligence and security agencies is to “educate” senior policy makers on the need to maintain intelligence—collection and analysis—a top national priority. It is important for senior intelligence officers to formulate the right questions for their policy masters, especially in a democracy, to raise adequate warnings regarding what might develop over the horizon, and be able “to speak truth to power.” What underpins the enduring professionalism of intelligence officers is their conviction that they do not make policy but inform policy making. Their basic duty, as they endeavor to protect the safety and well-being of their fellow citizens, is to analyze the impact of specific policies pursued by their leaders, both positively and negatively, and communicate such evidence-based analysis to the leaders without equivocation. Such professionalism is the best guarantee for a more enduring intelligence enterprise.

## NOTES

*Note:* All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official positions or views of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or any other U.S. government agency. Nothing in the contents should be construed as implying U.S. government authentication of information or agency endorsement of the author’s views. This material has been reviewed by the CIA to prevent the disclosure of classified information.

1. The term “Islamist” is used in this chapter as a neutral description of an individual, a group, a social movement, or a political party that is engaged in social, economic, judicial, educational, or political activism based on the activist’s interpretation of Islam. “Islamist” is associated with activism, both lawful and unlawful. “Islamic,” on the other hand, describes the adherence of a person, a group, a movement, or an action to Islam or the Muslim religion.

2. The discussion of Saudi proselytization and Wahhabism draws heavily on the author’s book, *A Necessary Engagement: Reinventing America’s Relations with the Muslim World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

3. *Wahhabism*, a term used synonymously with Salafism in Saudi Arabia, is a theological interpretation of Islam founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Arabia in the 18th century. It offers a narrow, conservative, strict, and literal interpretation of Islam revolving around the concept of *Tawhid*, or oneness of God. Wahhabism encourages its followers to view Jews and Christians as potential enemies and shun them. Being in control of the educational curricula in Saudi Arabia, the Wahhabi or Salafi religious leadership has established a Wahhabi-based curriculum on which generations of Saudi youth have been educated and nurtured.

4. Emile A. Nakhleh, “Islam in Japan: A Cause for Concern?” *Asia Policy* 5 (January 2008): 62–67.

5. George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 34–35.

6. *Ibid.*, 36.

7. Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: New York Police Department, Intelligence Division, 2007).

8. Jack Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgment Inside the Bush Administration* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 119.